

Testimony before the Planning & Development Committee  
Given by Sara C. Bronin  
March 2, 2009

My testimony this morning will be short. By way of a brief introduction, I am an associate professor at the University of Connecticut School of Law, teaching and researching in the areas of property and land use. I am also trained as an architect and serve as the attorney for the state's largest and greenest private urban development project, 360 State Street in New Haven.

I was glad to hear that a smart growth task force had been conveyed by members of this committee, and I applaud your efforts to engage policymakers and experts throughout the state. It would be very easy to aspire to nothing in the current economic climate, so your moving forward on various initiatives is heartening. I have three comments on the package of bills being discussed at this public hearing.

My first comment is that Connecticut could really benefit by strengthening regional planning. House Bills 6585 and 6466, and even Senate Bill 384, which adds language that makes regionalism one of the state's priorities, could encourage our 169 municipalities to see themselves as part of a larger and more coherent framework. I recently published a paper about the states playing a greater role in land use regulation (available here: [http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1325783](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1325783)), and based on that research I think there are strong reasons for a state with the geographic, topographic, and urban development characteristics that Connecticut has to consider regional and state initiatives in land use regulation.

My second comment relates to planning for mass transit initiatives, such as those considered by House Bill 6465. Last Friday, we held a conference at the Law School about rail transit in Connecticut, called "Can Rail Save Connecticut Cities?". The speakers included the Department of Transportation Commissioner Joseph Marie, State Representative David McCluskey, and University of Connecticut School of Engineering Professor Norman Garrick. At our conference, we heard a variety of perspectives, but everyone agreed that the state should create a coherent transportation plan which would stimulate economic development. I hope that this committee continues to work with the Transportation Committee to move transit initiatives forward.

Finally, my third comment is that investments in historic preservation are investments in economic development, particularly for a state with such a rich historic building stock. There are certain bills here, like House Bill 6464, which touch on the topic of preservation. As a board member of the Connecticut Trust and a local historic district commissioner in the City of Hartford, I have seen firsthand how far a dollar invested in preservation goes— farther, perhaps, than even new construction projects. I would encourage this committee to consider, both in the bills being heard today and otherwise, initiatives which promote and support historic preservation in this state.